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ABSTRACT

Positive ideas were generated from two programs sponsored by the Jefferson Community College (Louisville, Kentucky) Black Affairs Advisory Committee and given during Black History Week. The first program consisted of a panel of seven black professionals from the Louisville community which discussed "What It Takes to Make It: A Message for Students." Nineteen suggestions for students were offered by this panel. The most important theme emerging from this program was that students should assume the major share of the responsibility for their own futures. The second program consisted of a faculty/staff development session which permitted the staff to share ways to encourage black student retention. Using a mini-group "think tank" process, the faculty exchanged ideas on how to handle two hypothetical classroom-based situations involving black students. Nineteen ideas were given by the staff for the first situation which focused on a disruptive, militant student. Fifteen ideas were generated for the second situation which involved a group of students who were motivated but had academic deficiencies. (EM)

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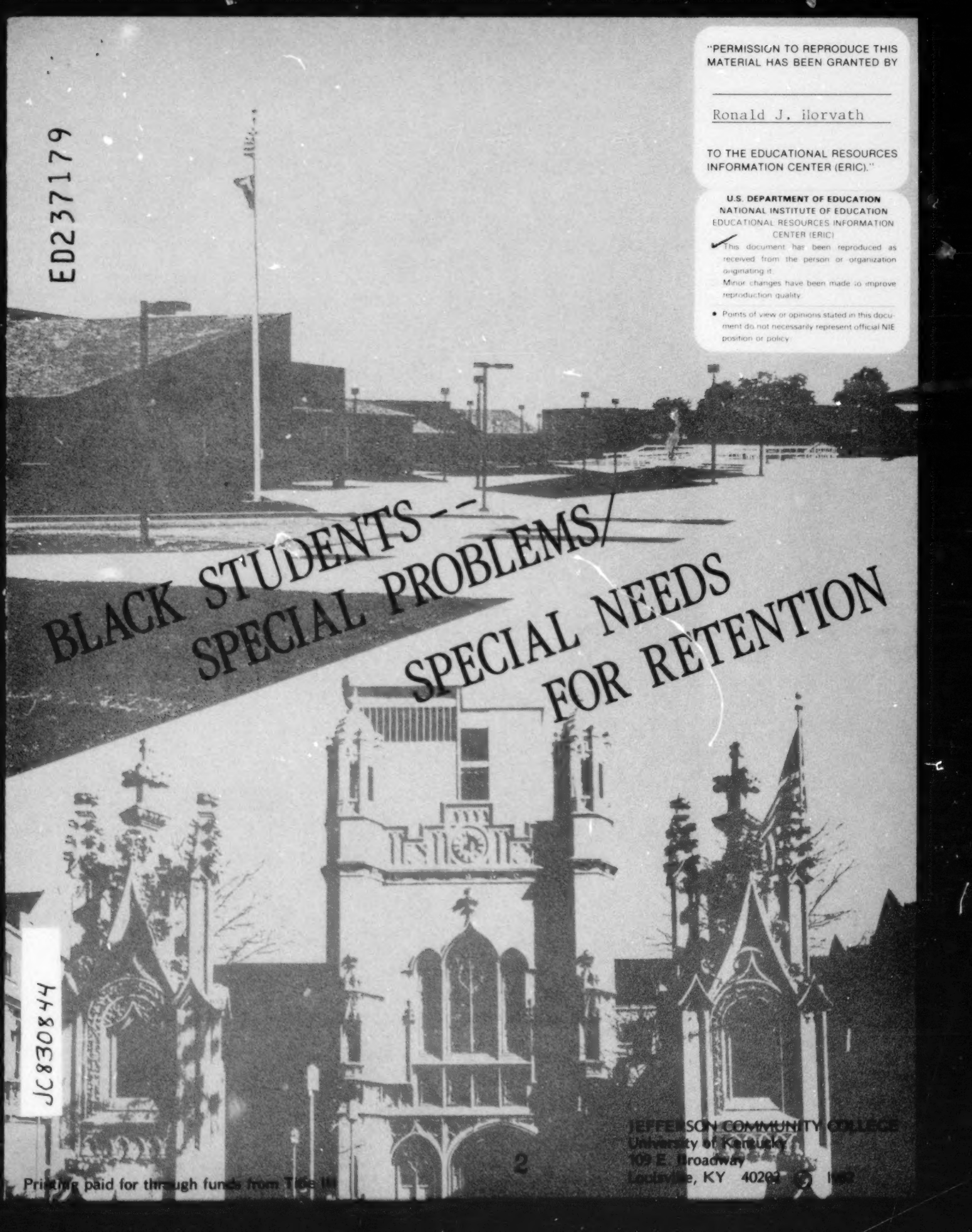

BLACK STUDENTS -- SPECIAL PROBLEMS/ SPECIAL NEEDS FOR RETENTION

JC830844

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Introduction

The Jefferson Community College Black Affairs Advisory Committee has aided immeasurably in raising the consciousness of all faculty and staff at JCC. The group established itself to improve the overall academic and social climate for Black students at the college, with a particular emphasis on their needs and opportunties. Among the events initiated and sponsored by this group were the activities for Black History Week (February 15 - 19). As part of the understanding of Black history and culture, the Black Affairs Advisory Committee sponsored a panel discussion featuring Black professionals from the community and a Faculty/Staff Development program to permit faculty to share ways to encourage Black student retention. The ideas generated from these programs are recorded in this pamphlet.

Panel of Black Professionals

The Black Affairs Advisory Committee invited seven prominent Black professionals from the Louisville community to present a panel entitled "What It Takes To Make It: A Message for Students". Although the remarks of the panel were directed toward the students in the audience, the information is of such great importance that it would be most appropriate for faculty to find some means of sharing these ideas with their students.

Black Professionals Panel Discussion

"What It Takes to Make it:
A Message for Students"

I. Guarding Your Self-Image; Creating Self-Esteem

1. Be level headed and responsible. Mature behavior earns respect and praise.
2. Have high expectations for yourself. Share these with your close friends.
3. Accent the positive.
4. Learn survival skills -- self-discipline, a positive self-image, appreciation for excellence, and concern for the welfare of others.
5. Have a belief in yourself as a person of worth, value, and esteem.
6. If you get a foot in the door, keep it there; avoid cop-outs and excuses.
7. Use intelligence, industriousness, and integrity to your own advantage; set yourself up as a model for other students to emulate.

II. Achieving Academic Excellence

8. Get the best education possible. Find out who the best teachers are and sign up for their courses.
9. Set specific career goals that are attainable. Counselors and Faculty will help you if you take the initiative to seek them out.
10. Don't fall behind in goals -- either yours or the class goals.
11. Complete your assignments and tasks in the best way you know how. If you don't know how, ASK.
12. Seek out and find help in courses; make an appointment with your teachers. Ask if they would recommend a tutor.
13. Earn the academic tools and degrees you will need in your career.
14. Forget the 8-hour day. Success is not built on clock-watching.

III. Developing External Relationships

15. Be a good citizen. Don't have a "chip" on your shoulder.
16. Demand two things: opportunity and challenge -- but remember there is a difference between assertiveness and aggressiveness.
17. Don't expect all people and all situations to be "love and honey." Trust your instincts about people and relationships.
18. Communicate opportunities to others.
19. Expect additional obstacles and overcome them. "Where these's a will, there's a way." If not, MAKE one.

Perhaps the most important theme that emerged from the presentation was the absolute necessity for students to assume the major share of responsibility for their own futures. The reader will quickly realize that these suggestions apply to all students -- Black and White.

The Mini-group Process for Faculty

Using the mini-group 'think tank' process, with eight to ten people/group, the faculty of Jefferson Community College shared ideas on how to handle two hypothetical classroom-based situations involving Black students: One with a disruptive, militant student (Situation I), and the other with a group of motivated students with academic deficiencies (Situation II).

Situation I

For the past four (4) weeks, one of your Black students has exhibited militant, aggressive, argumentative, and hostile behavior. The student is often tardy or doing something to disrupt your class. The student is barely passing with below average grades on tests and class assignments and is apathetic towards course content.

You've consulted with some of your colleagues who also have the student in their classes, and you discover that they are experiencing the same problem. All of you agree that the student offers legitimate excuses for his tardiness or absences, but the student expects you to understand the frequency and be lenient.

In the past you've listened to the student, but you continue to remind the student of his/her responsibilities. However, nothing you have tried is working.

WHAT POSITIVE THINGS CAN BE DONE TO HELP THIS STUDENT?

1. Faculty member should check his/her own behavior pattern to determine if all students are being treated in the same way.

2. Build a positive relationship with the student through positive feedback, stroking, and citing common interests rather than differences. Visibly demonstrate an "I CARE" attitude. These practices will help build the student's self-esteem.

3. Confront the student directly; but be cautious about using an authoritarian approach which might cause the student to be defensive. Work on joint solutions and provide friendly but constructive criticism. Establishing real limits for the student shows concern and encouragement.

4. Schedule an individual conference with the student. This meeting will provide an opportunity to meet as people to discuss tardiness, quality of work, and corrective actions. Try to get the student to open up and discuss the problems rather than "nagging". Get the student to do the talking by asking "open-ended" questions.

5. Get to know and understand the student's value system, but do it within the framework of your ground rules and standards. If applicable, class time could be used to discuss value systems.

6. Develop a written "contract" with the student (and for all students) regarding promptness, expected behavior, attendance, academic expectations, etc.

7. Meet again with your colleagues who have the student in class. Find out if you can uncover some common solutions all of you will use collectively.

8. Alert your Division Chairperson to the situation. Consult with him/her about additional strategies to be used with the student.

9. Appeal to the student's own sense of responsibility and possibly discuss the situation (not the student) with the class. The topic of discussion could be "How other people interpret behavior".

10. Assign some positive class responsibilities to the student. Utilize peer pressure to facilitate understanding and involvement.

11. Initiate contact with the student outside of class. Walk with him/her to the next class.

12. Reinforce student's self-esteem. Do not allow self-degrading remarks to pass unchallenged.

13. Arrange to bring in a Counselor, tutor other third party.

14. Engage in role playing (role reversal) with the student. Use other students to assist in role playing techniques. Focus on the perceptions of behavior.

15. Understand that some Black students have been conditioned by their past experiences to believe that all Whites are racist. Within this context, White faculty members have a responsibility to demonstrate that they are not racist.

16. Learn about non-verbal communication keys as a preventative measure.

17. Insist that the required work and time be made up.

18. When grading a poor test paper, put SEE ME on it instead of C, D, or E. The student will probably interpret this act as an invitation to receive help.

19. Lock the classroom door about five minutes after the class begins. This practice will discourage tardiness.

20. Find out the student's reasons for taking the course.

21. Ask the student if he/she has all the required textbooks for the course.

22. Give the student credit for class participation.

23. Be cautious about jumping to conclusions about exhibited behavior. Medical problems or reaction to medication can cause behavioral problems.

Situation II

You have eight Black students in your class who seem motivated; but based on test scores, written assignments, and class participation, the students are not grasping the materials. You speculate that the students' reading levels are anywhere between a 6th - 8th grade level. You've recommended to the students that they visit the Study Skills Center, Natural Science Learning Lab, or any othe Developmental Programs; but you don't know if the students have followed through.

A part of the problem in written assignments and class participation is that the students use slang excessively which makes it difficult for you and their peers to understand their input. The students apparently lack good study habits, and on tests they exhibit "test anxieties".

WHAT CAN POSITIVELY BE DONE TO HELP THESE STUDENTS?

1. Verify the students' reading scores before making any judgments.

2. Give the students practice in test-taking. Invite Reading faculty to guest lecture on test taking, SQ4R, and test anxiety.

3. Try to match the students' learning styles with the available learning aids and your own teaching style. Offer alternative tests and class materials designed for students with low reading levels.

4. Define clearly what is meant by "studying hard" or "devoting enough time" to the assignment. Specify a time sequence by saying, "It took me about an hour to read and understand this chapter".

5. Review the students' notes to determine what they are writing down. Use a lecture outline.

6. Teach a class unit on slang; Compare slang with standard English. Some lectures can be livened up by using "street" language. Students themselves can be a valuable resource. Let them teach you about being "bilingual".

7. Become more aware of Black contributions to our cultural heritage by finding innovative ways of using such information in class.

8. Use Black professionals from the community in the classroom as resource people and role models.

9. Purchase a dictionary of Afro-American slang and read it.

10. Don't send student to the various resource places for help. TAKE them; or, at the very least, give them a faculty name to meet with.

11. Do follow-up checks on your referrals to the Study Skills Center or Natural Science Learning Lab.

12. Develop a basic vocabulary list for your discipline. Require students to know it.

13. Develop a contract learning format for each class.

14. Develop a peer tutoring system or a "buddy-study" approach.

15. Encourage students to withdraw and enroll in a developmental class. Talk with some faculty who teach developmental courses to determine if the drop/add process is appropriate.

Conclusion

This pamphlet is the third formal publication of the J CC faculty. Previous publications were FULL CLASSROOMS: 95 PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS TO GUARANTEE STUDENT AND TEACHER SUCCESS and USED BOOKS: 54 SUGGESTIONS TO INCREASE LIBRARY USE. All three publications are the product of the faculty's collective ideas, judgments, and past experiences. Although every idea cannot be used by every faculty member (styles differ), we have demonstrated once again that we ourselves are our own best resource in creating a positive learning environment needed for student success.

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